

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION OECD PARIS

US MISSION GENEVA 7113

C O N F I D E N T I A L EC BRUSSELS 11541

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EEC ETRD EG GY JO IS

SUBJECT: COMMISSION OFFICIALS REPORT ON DISCUSSIONS WITH SYRIAN
AND LEBANESE OFFICIALS AND OTHER NEAR EAST DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) EC BRUSSELS 11429 (NOTAL), (B) EC BRUSSELS 7810

1. SUMMARY: COMMISSION OFFICIALS HAVE INFORMED US
OF THE RESULTS OF PRESIDENT ORTOLI'S RECENT TRIP TO
SYRIA. SYRIAN OFFICIALS SEE THE NEW COOPERATION
AGREEMENT WITH THE EC AS AN OPPORTUNITY TO EXPAND
TRADE AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES WITH THE EC AND AS AN EFFORT
TO STRIKE AN EQUILIBRIUM BETWEEN
EAST AND WEST. A RECENT LEBANESE DELEGATION
HAS REQUESTED EMERGENCY EC AID. THE COMMISSION PLANS
TO PROPOSE FOOD AID AND EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR
LEBANON. COMMISSION OFFICIALS ADD THAT THEIR PLANS
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TO SIGN IN EARLY DECEMBER THE MASHREK AGREEMENTS AND

ISRAELI PROTOCOLS MAY NOW BE DELAYED. END SUMMARY.

2. COMMISSION OFFICIALS HAVE INFORMED US OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF EC COMMISSION PRESIDENT ORTOLI'S OFFICIAL TRIP TO DAMASCUS ON ABOUT NOVEMBER 12-15, ORTOLI MET WITH SYRIAN PRIME MINISTER KHULAYFAWI, FOREIGN MINISTER KHADDAM AND ECONOMIC MINISTER IMADI. PREIDENT ASAD WAS NOT AVILABLE BECAUSE OF THE DATH OF HIS BROTHER. ALL SYRIAN OFFICIALS EMPHASIZED THEIR DESIRE FOR PEACE IN THE REGION. NO ONE DIRECTLY MENTIONED ISRAEL, BUT SYRIAN OFFICIALS SAID THEY WOULD NOT TOLERATE ENCROACHMENTS AGAINST ARAB TERRITORIES. THESE OFFICIALS EMPHASIZED SYRIA'S PEACEFUL OBJECTIVES IN LEBANON AND THEIR INTENTION NOT TO OCCUPY PERMANENTLY THE COUNTRY. THEY ADDED THAT SYRIA WOULD WELCOME AN EC/LEBANESE COOPERATION AGREEMENT (SEE BELOW).

3. REGARDING THE EC/SYRIAN COOPERATION AGREEMENT, TOP SYRIAN OFFICIALS SAID IT WOULD BE A MILESTONE IN SYRIA'S EFFORT TO STRIKE A BALANCED RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EAST AND WEST AND TO STRENGTHEN RELATIONS WITH THE EC. THEY NOTED THAT SYRIA EXPECTED THE AGREEMENT TO FACILITATE ACCESS TO EC MARKETS AND THEREBY HELP SYRIA SHIFT ITS TRADE FROM EASTERN TO WESTERN MARKETS. SYRIAN OFFICIALS EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE AGREEMENT WOULD ALSO ACCELERATE THEIR EFFORTS TO LIBERALIZE TRADE AND COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES. THEY WOULD WELCOME PRIVATE INVESTMENTS AND ENCOURAGED THE EC TO WORK WITH THE POTENTIAL ARAB INVESTORS TO DEVELOP TRILATERAL INVESTMENT PROJECTS IN SYRIA.

4. COMMISSION OFFICIALS WHO RE RESPONSIBLE FOR EC AFFAIRS IN THE MASHREK WERE FAVORABLY SURPRISED BY THE SYRIANS' WARM RECEPTION. THEY SAY THERE HAS BEEN A MARKED SHIFT IN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE WEST. THEY ARE CONCERNED, HOWEVER, THAT THE EC WILL NOT BE ABLE TO MEET SYRIAN EXPECTATIONS. THEY PLAN TO INTENSIFY EC
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EFFORTS TO PROMOTE SYRIAN TRADE AND BUSINESS ACTIVITIES IN THE EC AND TO INCREASE TRAINING GRANTS. THESE ACTIVITIES, HOWEVER, ONLY HAVE A LONG-TERM IMPACT. THE SMALL AMOUNT OF EC AID TO SYRIA -- 60 MILLION UNITS OF ACCOUNT -- WILL NOT BE OF MUCH IMMEDIATE ASSISTANCE.

5. TURNING TO LEBANESE AFFAIRS, COMMISSION OFFICIALS

TELL US THT LEBANESE LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS MINISTER
TUWAYNI RECENTLY MET WITH COMMISSIONER CHEYSSON.
TUWAYNI WAS SENT AS A SPECIAL EMISSARY OF THE NEW
GOVERNMENT TO REQUEST EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE FOR LEBANON
ESPECIALLY FOR THE RECONSTRUCTION OF BEIRUT.
CHEYSSON REPORTEDLY INDICATED THAT THE COMMISSION
WOULD PROPOSE TO THE EC COUNCIL A SPECIAL 1977
FOOD AID GRANT FOR LEBANON AMOUNTING TO \$4-5
MILLION. THIS GRANT WOULD BE COMPOSED OF WHEAT,
BUTTEROIL AND POWDERED SKIM MILK. THE COMMISSION
WOULD ALSO SUGGEST EMERGENCY AID TO BUY MEDICAL
AND OTHER NEEDED SUPPLIES AMOUNTING TO SEVERAL
HUNDRED THOUSAND DOLLARS. TAWAYNI ALSO SAID THE
GOI WAS INTERESTED IN NEGOTIATING A COOPERATION
AGREEMENT WITH THE EC. (THE EC HAS EARMARKED 30
MILLION UNITS OF ACCOUNT FOR LEBANON, SEE REF B.)
TAWAYNI ADDED, HOWEVER, THAT IT WOULD BE SEVERAL
MONTHS BEFORE THE GOL WOULD BE READY TO UNDERTAKE
SUCH NEGOTIATIONS. HE DID NOT KNOW WHAT ROLE HE
MIGHT HAVE IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT.

6. COMMISSIONOFFICIALS SAY THAT THEY WERE GUILTY
OF WISHFUL THINKING WHEN THEY INDICATED THAT THE
MASHREK AGREEMENTS AND NEW PROTOCOLS TO THE ISRAELI
AGREEMENT MIGHT BE SIGNED IN EARLY DECEMBER (SEE REF A).
THEY NOTE THT THE MASHREK COUNTRIES ARE AGAIN MAKING
DEMARCHES TO THE EC COUNCIL TO SEEK A REDUCTION IN
TE PERIOD OF THE FINANCIAL PROTOCOLS. THE COUNCIL
HAD DECIDED TO PROPOSE THAT THE PROTOCOLS BE
TERMINATED ON OCTOBER 31, 1981. THIS WOULD BE THE
SAME TIME THAT THE MAGHREB FINANCIAL PROTOCOLS
ARE SCHEDULED TO END. COMMISSION AND PERMDEL
SOURCES SAY THERE IS LITTLE CHANCE THAT THE
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COUNCIL WILL CHANGE IS DECISION, BUT THE MAGHREB'S
LAST MINUTE EFFORTS WILL LIKELY DELAY THE CONCLUSION
OF THE AGREEMENTS. A PROBLEM HAS ALSO DEVELOPED WITH
THE PROPOSED ISRAELI SIGNATURE. THE GOI HAS ASKED
TO HAVE THE CEREMONY IN JERUSALEM. THE COMMISSION HAS SUGGESTED
TEL AVIV IN ORDER TO AVOID OFFENDING THE ARABS. SO FAR THIS
ISSUE HAS NOT BEEN RESOLVED.HINTON

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